



## **COMMANDER'S STATEMENT ON COMBAT AND OPERATIONAL STRESS**



The Marine Corps develops leaders who are fit in body, mind, spirit and social areas of life; enabling them to assume progressively greater responsibilities. Stress is how we respond to mental, physical, spiritual and emotional challenges. Stress is a daily part of Marine Corps life. We use stress to build strength. Understanding stress reactions and proactively addressing stressors increases mission readiness, preserves the force and promotes the long-term health of our Marines. All Marines must find ways to address it for themselves, their Marines, their family and their unit in order to promote psychological resilience. We must have the ability to train and sustain a combat ready and resilient force capable of accomplishing any mission.

The Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) Teams will assist us in maintaining our warfighting capabilities by addressing the impacts of stress in the unit. MWSS-271 will take a proactive approach to combating stress by allowing quarterly OSCAR Team Training and ensuring the execution of OSCAR Deployment Cycle Training. We will each participate in activities to enhance force preservation, readiness, and the long-term health and well-being of Marines and their families. The Five Core Leader Functions promote principles of wellness, prevention, early intervention, identification, reintegration, reduction of stigma and will form the foundation for this command's OSCAR program:

**Strengthen.** Leaders will use their existing tools for training and developing Marines to build mental, physical, spiritual and social strength and resilience against the negative effects of stress. This includes tough training already being conducted to develop technical proficiency and increase unit cohesion. Unit cohesion also includes families, who will be offered OSCAR events in order to strengthen them against the stressors of military life.

**Risk Mitigation.** Some stress is unavoidable. Risk mitigation is important to reducing unnecessary stress. This is done using proper planning, risk management, 360 degree views of Marines and situations, and applying an ample amount of common sense. The desired end-state of risk mitigation is not to eliminate stress, but to safely expose Marines to stressors. Over time, the result will be Marines with a greater reserve to address those stressors that cannot be avoided or predicted.

**Identify.** We all must promptly identify and address signs of stress in ourselves and our fellow Marines before the situation escalates. Know and use the Stress Continuum and Stress Decision Flowchart. This is an important aspect of good small unit leadership.

**Treat.** Treatment is about taking action. It begins with self-care and peer support. This may range from addressing personal issues before they become stressors, talking to a Marine about an upcoming event to share lessons learned, or referring a Marine for further help from a chaplain or medical officer. If a Marine is referred for medical intervention, leaders must remain involved and aware of that Marine's ongoing requirements throughout the treatment cycle.

**Reintegrate.** Regardless of the level of a Marine's treatment, they will be assisted during the process and will be received into the unit completely and respectfully once recovered. This may require further mentorship and possibly some understanding of limitations imposed by their recovery. The expectation is that Marines with stress issues are and will continue to be effective members of the unit.

  
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